PROVINCE
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Speech from the Throne

At The Opening of the

Third Session

of the

Fifty-sixth General Assembly

of the Province of

Prince Edward Island

February 7th, 1985

THE HONOURABLE
JOSEPH AUBIN DOIRON

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF THE PROVINCE
OF
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

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MADAME SPEAKER, AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

It is my privilege, in the name of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, to welcome you to the Third Session of the Fifty-Sixth General Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island.

During the past year, my First Minister and I had the distinct pleasure, on behalf of all residents of Prince Edward Island, of greeting two distinguished and much-revered visitors to Canada. In Halifax, we joined with Nova Scotia to welcome His Holiness Pope John Paul II during his historic first visit to our nation. Shortly after, we joined other Lieutenant Governors and Premiers in welcoming our gracious Soveriegn, accompanied by H.R.H. Prince Philip, in the course of the Royal Visit to Canada. The profound impact of their visits remains throughout the country.

Au cours de l'année écoulée, mon Premier ministre et moi avons eu le grand plaisir de saluer, au nom de tous les résidents de l'Ile-du-Prince-Edouard, deux distingués visiteurs bien révérés de tous. A Halifax, nous nous sommes unis aux gens de la Nouvelle-Ecosse pour accueillir Sa Sainteté le Pape Jean-Paul II lors de sa première et mémorable visite au Canada. Peu après, en compagnie de tous les autres lieutenants-gouverneurs et premiers ministres du Canada, nous avons souhaité la bienvenue à notre gracieuse Souveraine accompagnée de Son Altesse Royale le Prince Philip, au cours de la visite royale au Canada. L'effet profond de ces deux visites se fait sentir encore à travers le pays.

THE ECONOMY

The past year has seen the election of a new Government in Ottawa, an election which was a clear indication that Canadians, and Islanders as well, desired a change in both the style and substance of the Federal Government. My Government welcomes this change and will continue to display the same high level of cooperation in our dealings with this Government as we have done with past Federal Governments.

While my Government supports the new Federal Government in its efforts to reduce the deficit, and while expenditure cuts to achieve this goal will instill confidence in the Canadian economy, the new Federal Government will be reminded, as the need may arise, that such cuts must not adversely affect this Province more than other Provinces or Regions. The Federal Government, therefore, must be forever aware of regional and Provincial disparities. Through diligent negotiation, the Federal Government will better understand our particular problems.

Specific information with respect to the state of the Province's finances will be unveiled by the Minister of Finance and Tourism. During the past two years, major efforts have been made to bring Government spending under control. I am pleased to say today that this goal has been, to a large extent, accomplished.

The support of employees in the public sector was a crucial factor in attaining this success as was the support given by all Islanders. Everyone has had to be patient as my Government worked to bring our financial affairs under control. However, complete economic recovery has not yet arrived and we must all work to sustain the fragile recovery attained to date.

ECONOMIC INITIATIVES

At the core of the economic recovery is the continued support for the various communities of P.E.I. which are so vital to the strength of both the social and economic sectors of our society. We must be mindful of the quality of community life in planning and charting the direction for the future growth and development of our Province.

The past year has seen the commencement of the implementation of the strategy for economic development entitled "Blending Tradition and Innovation". This task was undertaken with a clear vision to strengthen and expand our traditional resource-based industries blended with support for the establishment of industries focussing on advanced and new technology.

In designing the P.E.I. Development Strategy, my Government recognized that the primary aim of any industrial policy is to provide an economy which encourages new investment in job generating activities. We have accepted the challenge and have worked diligently this past year to build a climate of reward and risk that we believe lies at the heart of encouraging much needed capital investment.

The cornerstone of the implementation of the economic development strategy is the Prince Edward Island Development Agency. During the initial year of the Agency's existence, it has experienced unqualified success.

The level of activity at the Prince Edward Island Development Agency is higher than for its predecessors, Industrial Enterprises Incorporated and the Market Development Centre. Applications and approvals for financial assistance of a non-marketing nature are being processed at the rate of four times the rate of 1983. Over 300 jobs are expected to result from Agency assistance in 1984. In the marketing branch of the Agency a total of 412 projects were initiated on behalf of clients in all sectors, particularly the resource-based sectors of Agriculture and Fisheries.

People are the central focus in the strengthening of our Island economy. The creation of meaningful long-term jobs through the initiative and ingenuity of the private sector is a treasured goal of my Government. The Department of Industry, in concert with the Prince Edward Island Development Agency, continues to work on this most important problem of job creation. My Government remains convinced that while we cannot disregard the importance of a healthy big-business sector, the focus of our policies should converge on the small business sector.

There has been an overwhelming response to the Small Business Incentive Program. During the past year 110 jobs have been created by this Program. As a result, the Program will be expanded over a period of three years. Small businesses are vital to the growth of our economy and the building blocks of vibrant local communities.

Entrepreneurial initiative remains essential to developing a new economic momentum in our Province. Students from both universities and technical colleges indicate a strong desire to establish businesses themselves. In addition to continuing the Student Venture Program, a new program will be established to support these people because new enterprises are the engine of growth and innovation. As well, new enterprises are a main source of new jobs. It is my Government's intention to encourage and expand the entrepreneurial spirit of young Islanders.

The interdepartmental study on a "cultural industry" for P.E.I. has now been received. Over the past decade this Province's cultural industries have undergone a process of rapid growth and maturity. The Province now has film companies producing industrial, promotional and dramatic film for national and international markets; an Island owned and operated publishing house; several professional dance companies; and a large and growing craft industry.

Of these, the craft industry is the best known success story. Employment today stands at 75 full-time people and over 800 part-time people. The Department of Industry will establish a cultural industries section within its Community Economic Development Division. As well, my Government will develop a three-year program to further encourage the development of cultural industries in P.E.I.

The initiatives in this area will address meaningful job creation through industries and small businesses which are appropriate to our Island way of life. An integral component of this program is the development of a number of small-scale industries which could be fostered as a "spin-off" to existing cultural and tourism activities. Some of these activities function in, and enhance our rural communities.

While it is important to develop industry and small business which is appropriate to P.E.I., the foundation of economic development and economic recovery rests in our traditional, resource-based industries of Agriculture, Fisheries and Tourism. My Government will, therefore, bring forward for your consideration new initiatives in these areas.

The strength of our Agriculture and Fishing Industries has always been the test of the true strength of our Island's economic fabric. Through these difficult economic times, my Government has endeavoured to maintain the strength of these sectors not only because of their economic importance but because they are an integral component in the existence of our Island communities.

To ensure a stable future for our red meat industry my Government, in cooperation with producers and with the Federal Government, will continue its determined efforts to provide for the short-term stability and long-term viability of the industry.

To enhance the viability of this industry consideration is being given to incentives to increase production and improve productivity of hog producers across the Province. As well, my Government will be presenting for your consideration a program to assist in improving the quality of Island beef.

The heritage of our Island's agricultural industry is in the family farm. It is important that the tradition of the family farm be maintained. Therefore, to encourage young people to become farmers a new program will be introduced to lessen the burden in financing the cost of the purchase of capital assets.

The Agriculture Sub-Agreement of the Economic Regional Development Agreement, has, as one of its objectives, the goal of making our Island farmers more competitive in the production of various commodities, particularly, through projects which enhance productivity. This Agreement also provides for programs on soil and water conservation, land management, increased research activities, marketing initiatives, as well as plant and animal health programs. Through greater Federal-Provincial cooperation, my Government is of the view that all these efforts will greatly enhance agriculture. My Ministers will continue to advocate changes in Federal Policy which will enhance the competitive position of Island Farmers.

Through the Fisheries Sub-Agreement, a number of now-successful initiatives will be continued and new development will be promoted. The major emphasis of the Sub-Agreement programs in the fishery is quality enhancement to ensure the production of the consistently high quality fish products demanded by today's marketplace. The Sub-Agreement will also allow for the strengthening of the staff of the Department of Fisheries to serve better the needs of the Fishery and to reflect our continued commitment to this important industry.

Fishermen will continue to be assisted with interest relief on loans necessary for capital investment in their fishing enterprises and for working capital. Energy efficiency will continue to be encouraged through continued assistance in converting to diesel power in fishing vessels.

Aquaculture industries on P.E.I. will also be assisted to capitalize on the potential for job creation and expanded markets offered by this high quality aspect of our industry.

My Government takes pride in the positive signs emanating from the Tourism Industry during the 1984 season. With an increase in visitation of 4.5% we believe we are now receiving the benefits of our earlier efforts.

The recent signing of a $9 million Tourism Sub-Agreement between the Federal Government and this Province which provides for increased marketing activities will permit us to continue the recent trend toward continued growth.

To provide greater stability for those people working in our tourist industry, we will be initiating a three-year program designed to assist the private sector in the extension of our tourist season.

While the manufacturing sector in this Province is small by comparison with other Provinces, my Government has worked diligently over the past number of years to strengthen this sector as it relates to our basic industries of fisheries and agriculture. New enterprises, as well as the modernization and maintenance of existing enterprises, will be encouraged with the objective of providing new jobs.

Another natural resource which my Government has worked to develop and improve is our forests. During the past year, much has been done to improve our Island Forests. The Department of Energy and Forestry now has over 1,000 woodlot owners participating in the Private Woodlot Management Program. Our Island forests hold potential for future income and employment. Forest management is the key to realizing this potential.

In a continuing effort to provide employment opportunities for Islanders, the P.E.I. Energy Corporation has launched an extremely successful job creation program. This program has the two-fold effect of carrying out improvements to our Provincial Crown woodlots and providing employment for 175 people.

The high cost of energy, particularly electricity, continues to be an impediment to continued growth and development. My Government continues in its efforts to reduce electrical costs through an arrangemnent with the Federal Government as well as the Provinces of New Brunswick and Quebec and is optimistic that these negotiations will be satisfactorily concluded.

SOCIAL INITIATIVES

As indicated previously, my Government is concerned about the strength of our economy, particularly as it relates to the creation of meaningful, long-term jobs. Work is not only necessary for a livelihood but productive and satisfying work is of critical importance for the social well-being of workers and their families.

Government must be fair and humane in responding to the needs of our people, particularly to the needs of the disabled and disadvantaged. Programs must be developed and initiated that will assure equity in the social and economic growth of all Islanders.

Lengthy consultations have been undertaken with the people of this Province on matters of social policy. It is critical in the maintenance of well-managed public policy that Government outline its strategy for the development of the economic and social sectors of our society. Last year, my Government presented for your consideration its economic strategy. A Policy on Social Development is now being devised and it will communicate my Government's philosophy, basic principles and priorities to all provincial departments and agencies, the Federal Government and most importantly the people of P.E.I.

My Government is committed to a consistent approach to social policy as well as coordinated social and economic policies.

Over the past number of years, a commitment has been made to the cultural well-being of our Province. A strong appreciation for Island culture does much to enhance a true sense and spirit of community. Policies have been developed over the years to kindle and preserve this spirit. In addition to maintaining and preserving the existing policies, new initiatives will be introduced to preserve the heritage of our communities.

The young people of this Province are the investment we have in the future. The quality of education provided to our young people is vital to their growth and development. During the past year, the Department of Education received the recommendations of the Paquette Commission on our education system. In response to a recommendation contained in the Report, the Minister of Education will shortly announce the composition of a committee to advise my Government on the numerous recommendations concerning our public school system. My Government will continue to provide the same high level of education, at all levels, as it has provided over the past years.

Realizing that there are students within the school system who, because of disability, are impeded in the progress they make, a program of special education will be undertaken. This program will allow our Island school system to provide an increased level of service to students with special needs.

The United Nations has declared 1985 International Year of Youth. My Government has, therefore, felt it appropriate to name a Youth Ambassador who will be charged, for the year 1985, with the responsibility of seeking out ideas from our youth on aspects of Government policy. The focus will be not only on the social pressures imposed upon our youth but, more importantly, input will be sought from our young people on a number of subjects including job creation and education. While such consultation is an ongoing process, my Government believes that this is the year to give a special direction to our Youth consultations.

While great emphasis is placed on the importance of young people in the future development of our Province, my Government does not overlook the tremendous contribution made both presently and in the past by our Senior Citizens. It is a stated goal to give our Senior Citizens the opportunity to remain in their homes and contribute in a meaningful way to their cherished communities. An Emergency Home Repair Program to assist senior citizens in the maintenance of their homes will be initiated during the coming year.

A need also exists to develop and reorganize services which permit people, particularly the elderly, to live at home while requiring some degree of medical help. My Government's efforts in this regard will be founded on the firm belief that the family is central to our well-being and essential for the preservation of our communities.

The Department of Health and Social Services will announce a program of home-based care which will be directed toward meeting the important needs of our Senior Citizens who require some degree of medical assistance.

Institutional care will also be maintained at its existing high level across the Province. Wedgewood Manor has now opened in Summerside, construction is under way on new facilities for Riverside and construction will begin on a replacement for Beach Grove Home. Renovations will be completed on the new Prince Edward Home and detailed planning will proceed for a new Hospital in Souris.

The beauty of our Island Province is world famous. All Islanders take extreme pride in the maintenance of their individual properties thus assisting to maintain the pastoral beauty with which we have been blessed. To preserve this characteristic, my Government recognizes a need for a program of Province-wide beautification. To complement and enrich the outstanding programs of the P.E.I. Rural Beautification Society and our Women's Institutes, programs involving government departments and Island communities will be expanded and coordinated. This approach will not only enhance the beauty of our Province but, as well, will address environmental concerns, provide jobs and assist our tourist industry.

The Department of Transportation and Public Works is in the second year of its three-year program of highway recapping. This program, which is proving most successful, is key to an efficient transportation system. This program will be complemented by a new program to upgrade and improve our existing clay roads.

The most vital link in our transportation system is, of course, our ferry system. My Government continues to strive for the improvement of this system at a cost which is economical to our Island businesses and producers.

The improvement and upgrading of the sewer and water systems of our municipalities is key to their stability. While my Government recognizes a role for the Federal Government in this area, a three-year program will be introduced for provincial assistance to our municipalities. This initiative is again consistent with the view that our communities are at the core of sound economic recovery.

MADAM SPEAKER, AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

Various legislative proposals will be introduced for your consideration.

You will be asked to appropriate the funds required for the services and payments required by this Assembly.

The Public Accounts and reports of the various departments and agencies for the year ending March 31, 1984, will be tabled for your information. The Interim Report, forecasting estimated Revenues and Expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1985, and the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 1985, will also be presented for your consideration.

MADAME L'ORATEUR ET MEMBRES DE L'ASSEMBLEE LEGISLATIVE:

Puisse la divine Providence vous guider dans vos délibérations.

MADAM SPEAKER, AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

May Divine Providence guide your deliberations.